

Update on Enhancing the Convention's visibility and synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements and other international institutions

Actions requested:

The Standing Committee is invited to:

- i. take note of the progress in implementing Resolution XIII.7 on *Enhancing the Convention's visibility and synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements and other international institutions*;
- ii. take note of document SC58 Doc.18 and provide guidance to the Secretariat on the plan to strengthen synergies with other MEAs and contributions to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework in accordance with Resolution XIII.7;
- iii. take note of the review of the fifth joint Work Plan 2011-2020 (document SC59 Doc.16.1) between the Secretariats of the Convention on Wetlands and the Convention on Biological Diversity that informs the preparation of an updated joint work plan; and
- iv. review the draft resolution on enhancing the Convention's visibility and synergies with other MEAs and other international institutions in document SC59 Doc.16 (<https://www.ramsar.org/document/sc59-doc16-enhancing-the-conventions-visibility-and-synergies-with-other-multilateral>), for consideration by the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

Background

1. Resolution XIII.7 on *Enhancing the Convention's visibility and synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements and other international institutions* instructed the Secretariat to report regularly to the Standing Committee on progress in implementing this Resolution and Resolution XI.6 on *Partnership and synergies with Multilateral Environmental Agreements and other institutions*.
2. The Secretariat prepared documents SC58 Doc.18¹ and SC59 Doc.16² *Enhancing the Convention's visibility and synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements and other international institutions* with the progress in the implementation of Resolution XIII.7 and

¹ <https://www.ramsar.org/document/sc58-doc18-enhancing-the-conventions-visibility-and-synergies-with-other-multilateral>

² <https://www.ramsar.org/document/sc59-doc16-enhancing-the-conventions-visibility-and-synergies-with-other-multilateral>

XI.6. In Annex 1 of document SC58 Doc.18 is the plan to strengthen synergies with other MEAs and contributions to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, for consideration by the Standing Committee. However, these documents were not addressed during the intersessional process of the 58th meeting of Standing Committee (SC58) in 2020 or SC59 in June 2021.

3. This update report covers the main activities undertaken since SC59 in accordance with Resolutions XIII.7 and XI.6, and specifically the activities related to the Biodiversity Liaison Group (BLG), the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), and the progress made on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and with MEAs, UNEP and other institutions.

Work under the Biodiversity Liaison Group

4. The Secretariat has continued to participate in the meetings and joint actions of the BLG in accordance with the Group's Plan for Joint Activities. The Secretariat participated in the virtual meeting of the BLG on 6 October 2021 with a major focus on engagement in the process for the development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP15) and COP26 of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). A joint statement of the BLG was delivered on 12 October 2021 at the Panel *Promoting synergistic action for biodiversity, climate, land and oceans* at the High-Level Segment of CBD COP15 (part 1).

Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

5. Cooperation with the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) continues in the context of the existing Memorandum of Cooperation. The Secretariat participated in the 8th Plenary of IPBES, held virtually from 14 to 24 June 2021. A statement was submitted, stressing the importance of the nexus assessment and transformative change assessment considered at the meeting, emphasizing how wetlands interlink biodiversity, climate, water, food, energy and health, and how recognition of this and of the value of wetlands to society are key to achieving transformative change. The Chair of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) participated in the meeting of the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel of IPBES, held virtually from 11 to 19 October 2021.

Cooperation with other multilateral environmental agreements

6. The Secretariat continues to collaborate actively with other MEAs, concentrating its efforts in accordance with paragraph 44 of Resolution XII.3 on cooperation and synergies with the biodiversity-related Conventions. More specific areas of cooperation continue to be implemented with these MEAs within the existing memoranda, in particular with the CBD, the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) and the World Heritage Convention (WHC) as well as with the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).
7. In accordance with Paragraph 23 of Resolution XIII.7, a plan to strengthen synergies with other MEAs, and the Convention's contributions to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, was presented in Annex 1 of document SC58 Doc.18 for the consideration and advice of the Standing Committee. However, as mentioned above, these documents were not addressed during the intersessional process of SC58 in 2020 or SC59 in June 2021.

Convention on Biological Diversity

8. The Secretariat has continued to work to strengthen collaboration with the CBD, providing inputs to different processes, mainly on the preparation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. In this regard, the Secretariat prepared a document and shared it with all Contracting Parties on 8 August 2021 highlighting the issues identified as being most relevant to the Convention in order to ensure that Parties attending the third meeting of the Open-ended Working Group on the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework could articulate the importance of wetlands. The Secretariat also sent a reminder to Contracting Parties on the Standing Committee (Decision SC57-26) encouraging Contracting Parties, through their Ramsar National Focal Points, to liaise and engage with their counterparts in the CBD and to participate in the development of their national positions related to the CBD's post-2020 global biodiversity framework process, in order to seek to ensure that Ramsar-relevant elements are included within country positions and submissions to the CBD process to develop the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. With these elements the Secretariat provided inputs to the third meeting of the Open-ended Working Group from 23 August to 3 September 2021 and at the twenty-fourth meeting of the Subsidiary Bodies on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA24) and on Implementation (SBI3) during February, March, May and June 2021.
9. The Secretary General delivered a video statement at the High-Level Segment of CBD COP15 (part 1) on 12 October 2021 and participated in the Executive Briefing organized by the Geneva Network on 2 November 2021 to highlight the outcomes of part 1 of CBD COP15 and the next steps for the second part of the Conference, as well as the Subsidiary Bodies and Open-ended Working Group meetings, scheduled to take place in person in Geneva in 2022. The Secretary General was a panellist in the side event organized by the CBD at UNFCCC COP26 on 6 November, *CBD COP 15: Strengthening Synergies through the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and Promoting Transformational Change to Restore Balance with Nature*.
10. As noted in document SC59 Doc.16 in 2021, the Secretariat has continued the discussions with the CBD Secretariat on the renewal of the Joint Work Plan. As part of the review of the Fifth Joint Work Plan 2011-2020, a joint Notification of both Secretariats was sent on 2 November 2020 inviting Parties and other Governments to complete an online survey in order to take stock of progress made toward the implementation of their activities as outlined in the Fifth Joint Work Plan. The review prepared by the Secretariats of the two Conventions provides an overview of progress in its implementation, identifies lessons learned and informs the preparation of an updated joint work plan that will also take into consideration the Global Biodiversity Framework adopted by CBD COP15. The review is published as document SC59 Doc.16.1³.

Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

11. Resolution XIII.20 *Promoting the conservation and wise use of intertidal wetlands and ecologically-associated habitats* requests the Secretariat to explore with other relevant multilateral environmental agreements and stakeholders the possibility to set up a multi-stakeholder global coastal forum. A similar request is also found in CMS Resolution 12.25 *Promoting Conservation of Critical Intertidal and other coastal Habitats for Migratory Species*, CBD Decision 14/30 *Cooperation with other conventions, international organizations and initiatives*, and the IUCN World Conservation Congress Resolution 030 *Enhancing the resilience of coastal areas in the face of climate change, biodiversity crisis and rapid coastal development*.

³ <https://www.ramsar.org/document/sc59-doc161-review-of-the-fifth-joint-work-plan-between-the-convention-on-biological>

In this regard, the Secretariat participated as an observer in the consultations lead by Eco Foundation Global and RSPB - BirdLife in the United Kingdom in November and December 2021 on the development of a World Coastal Forum and has also liaised with the CMS and CBD Secretariats to provide joint comments to this process.

12. The Secretary General delivered a video message in the Opening Ceremony of the hybrid World Coastal Forum event on 10 January 2022 in Yancheng City, Jiangsu Province, China at the invitation of the Vice Minister, Ministry of Natural Resources of China. The Secretariat will continue engaging in this process as an observer, in line with its mandate as provided in Resolution XIII.20 paragraph 36, and will inform the Standing Committee of any further development on this matter.

Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage

13. The Secretariat participated in the 44th session of the World Heritage Committee from 16 to 31 July 2021 and noted with appreciation the inscription of Getbol tidal flats in the Republic of Korea and Colchic rainforests and wetlands in Georgia to the List of World Heritage properties, covering five existing Wetlands of International Importance. Reports of joint missions undertaken in early 2020 concerning two sites listed under both Conventions, Venice and its Lagoon in Italy and Doñana in Spain, were published in 2021.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

14. In the lead-up to UNFCCC COP26 the Secretariat prepared a brief on harnessing wetland wise use, protection and restoration in delivering climate change outcomes, available in three languages. The Secretariat co-organized three events during COP26, exploring different aspects of wetlands action for climate change outcomes: *Financing Wetlands Conservation and Restoration for Climate Benefits – Challenges and Opportunities*, held on 4 November at the Republic of Korea Pavilion *Partners for Wetlands: Decade for Wetland Restoration*, held on 8 November at the Peatlands Pavilion; and *Leveraging MEA synergies in Peatland protection and restoration for climate outcomes*, held on 10 November, also at the Peatlands Pavilion. Secretariat staff also made contributions to a number of events organized by Contracting Parties to the Convention and other partners, including on the role of peatlands and blue carbon in climate change adaptation and mitigation, coastal ecosystems, water stewardship, and transboundary wetlands.

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

15. The Secretariat participated in the workshop *Optimizing the use of Sustainable Land Management, Ecosystem-based Adaptation and Ecosystem-based Disaster Risk Reduction to align Nature-based Solutions towards multi-goal oriented outcomes*, held virtually on 29 July 2021. The workshop was organized under a project funded by UNCCD and implemented by the UNU Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS), resulting in publication of the report *Coherence and Alignment among Sustainable Land Management, Ecosystem-based Adaptation, Ecosystem-based Disaster Risk Reduction and Nature-based Solutions*. The Secretariat continued liaison with the UNCCD, including its Science-Policy Interface, and potential collaboration in relevant activities in line with Annex 1 of document SC58 Doc.18 including activities of the STRP, as well as in relation to the *Global Wetlands Outlook Special Edition 2021* and the *Global Land Outlook*.

Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes

16. The Secretariat participated in the 9th session of the Meeting of the Parties of the UN Water Convention from 29 September to 1 October 2021, noting the opportunities for synergies and cooperation in river basins with active programmes of transboundary cooperation, notably those covered by the Ramsar Regional Initiatives focusing on the Amazon, La Plata, Niger and Senegal river basins, Central and Eastern Africa, Central Asia and West Asia.

Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC)

17. Under the MOU signed in 2020, the Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands and the Secretary *pro tempore* of the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles continue exchanging information on relevant activities and materials to enable the listing of Wetlands of International Importance that are important for sea turtles.

Sustainable Development Goals

18. In accordance with Decision SC53-17 and Resolution XIII.7, the Secretariat continues to actively engage in ongoing work on the SDGs, including in the meetings of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) as co-custodian of SDG 6 (on “Water and Sanitation”) Indicator 6.6.1 (on “change in extent of water-related ecosystems over time”).
19. In this context, the Secretariat participated in the 12th meeting of the IAEG-SDGs, which took place virtually from 2 to 4 November 2021. The main outcomes of this meeting were: i) review and update of the tier classification of indicators; ii) review the refinement proposals of the global SDG framework; iii) discuss the work of the IAEG-SDGs sub-group on metadata review; iv) review the work of the working groups of the IAEG-SDGs; v) share best practices on implementation, monitoring and reporting on SDGs, including national, regional, and global SDG reporting; and vi) review the workplan and next steps of the IAEG-SDGs.
20. As was the case for the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2021, the Secretariat is preparing a joint storyline with UNEP for the UN Secretary General’s Report to the High-Level Political Forum in July 2022. The Secretariat also continues to engage with UN Water on the work programme for SDG 6.
21. In line with Resolution XIII.7 and Decision SC57-47 on wetland inventories, the Secretariat continues to work with Contracting Parties to complete and refine information on wetland extent that was submitted in National Reports. Further efforts are ongoing to support Contracting Parties on the development of wetlands inventories and collection of missing data on wetland extent to report on SDG 6 Indicator 6.6.1. In this regard, a detailed description of the progress on the Convention Acceleration Action on SDGs “Wetland inventories to support Contracting Parties to achieve Indicator 6.6.1” under SDG 6 is described in documents SC58 Doc.9 and SC59 Doc.9 which were not addressed at SC59 in June 2021, and on the Acceleration Actions page of the SDGs Knowledge Platform⁴.
22. Regarding the achievement of SDG 14 “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development”, as noted in previous reports the Secretary General is co-focal point with IUCN of the Community of Ocean Action on Mangroves and

⁴ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgactions>

participated in the “Keeping the Momentum for Ocean Action” Webinar series for 2021 “Implementing SDG 14 with the Communities of Ocean Action” organized by UN DESA.

23. The Secretary General provided a video speech on 18 November 2021 at the event “Starting at the Source to Save the Ocean”, with other heads of organization, including UN agency leaders, to raise awareness of Source to Sea Management approaches through social media.
24. At the IUCN World Conservation Congress’ closing plenary, “A blue breakthrough”, on 7 September 2021, the Secretary General participated as a panellist emphasizing the importance of healthy wetlands for ocean health, work under the Convention on Wetlands to enshrine the “wise use” concept, and the commitment of Contracting Parties to maintain health of wetlands as key to human wellbeing, carbon storage, disaster risk reduction and biodiversity benefits.

Actions to strengthen cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme and other international institutions

25. As noted in previous reports to the Standing Committee, the Secretariat is continuing to work to strengthen collaboration with the United Nations agencies and other international institutions.

Environment Management Group

26. The Secretariat continues its engagement in ongoing work of the United Nations Environment Management Group (EMG). The Secretary General participated in the 27th Senior Officials Meeting of the EMG held virtually on 7 October 2021, which established an EMG Issue Management Group on Biodiversity to facilitate and enable a streamlined approach and support the implementation of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, the UN Common Approach to biodiversity and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.
27. The Secretariat participated in the preparation of the report *An overview of UN Activities and Initiatives related to Marine Litter and Microplastics* commissioned by the EMG, stressing that marine litter and microplastics are carried to the seas and oceans essentially through inland and coastal wetlands that need to become part of the solutions to reduce such pollution.

Collaboration with UNEP

28. The Secretariat and UNEP continue to develop cooperative activities to promote synergies and improve the implementation of the Convention, and actions are underway to renew the Memorandum of Understanding.
29. The Convention on Wetlands as co-custodian with UNEP of SDG Indicator 6.6.1 prepared a joint storyline with UNEP for the UN Secretary General’s Report on SDGs for the High-Level Political Forum in July 2022.
30. The Secretariat continued to participate in the synergies project “Realizing Synergies for Biodiversity” led by UNEP and with the participation of the other biodiversity-related Conventions, in response to UNEA Resolution 2/17.
31. The Secretariat participated as a speaker in the interactive online course “implementation of multilateral agreements” organized by UNEP and the Center for Governance and Sustainability of the University of Massachusetts Boston on 30 November and 7 December 2021 and 8 February 2022, with a focus on countries from the Middle East and North Africa region.

32. The Secretariat continued to contribute to the InforMEA initiative and participated in the 12th meeting of the InforMEA Steering Committee that took place virtually on 16 November 2021. The Secretariat contributed on issues including API implementation, semantic indexing and e-learning.
33. An introductory course on the Convention on Wetlands is under development and will be available when completed to download on the Convention's website. The course will also be made available on the United Nations InforMEA learning and knowledge platform that hosts information and introductory courses on different MEAs.
34. As a Global Partner of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, the Secretariat continues to actively engage in this agenda and the task forces on monitoring of aquatic and transitional ecosystems and best practices. These engagements informed the consideration of SDG 6 Indicator 6.6.1 for which the Convention is co-custodian and various targets of the Convention's Fourth Strategic Plan as priority indicators of the UN Decade's monitoring framework. To mark the opening of the UN Decade on 5 June 2021, the Secretariat produced three fact sheets highlighting the untapped potential of wetlands to assist restoration efforts by Contracting Parties, policy makers and practitioners: see <https://www.ramsar.org/document/wetlands-restoration-unlocking-the-untapped-potential-of-the-earths-most-valuable-ecosystem>.
35. The Secretariat, as part of the Global Peatlands Initiative, joined the development team of the Global Peatland Assessment, coordinated by UNEP-WCMC.

Collaboration with International Organization Partners

36. The Secretariat continues to strengthen its collaboration with the International Organization Partners (IOPs) of the Convention. Periodic teleconferences between the partners are held to review implementation of the Joint Activities for Collaboration in the renewed Memorandum of Cooperation. The IOPs contributed to the development of the 50th Anniversary campaign and actively supported World Wetlands Day 2022.
37. The Secretary General and Secretariat staff participated actively at the IUCN World Conservation Congress, held in Marseille, France from 3 to 7 September 2021, through contributions to sessions on site as well as virtually. The Secretary General was a panellist in the events organized by IUCN "Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework: Recipe for Success" on 5 September and "IUCN Global Species Action Plan: supporting implementation of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework through species conservation" on 6 September. She delivered remarks in the opening plenary "Our Freshwater Global Risk: Taking Actions to Reverse the Trend" on 4 September and the closing plenary "Deep Time 2029: What must we do now in 2021, to successfully address the Nature Emergency by 2050?" on 5 September. The Secretary General also participated in a high-level roundtable organized by the Ministère de l'Écologie of France on 5 September, exploring how France and the EU can further scale wetlands actions.
38. The six IOPs in collaboration with the Secretariat organized at UNFCCC COP26 the event "Partners for Wetlands: Decade for Wetland Restoration", on 8 November 2021. The event highlighted why wetland restoration needs to be rapidly scaled up to tackle the climate change and biodiversity crises during the UN Decade for Ecosystem Restoration, and illustrated the readiness that exists for this based on the Convention, efforts by Parties and the work of IOPs.

Collaboration with the International Union for Conservation of Nature

39. The Secretariat continues to collaborate closely with IUCN through the annual meetings of the IUCN/Secretariat Liaison Group, to support the operations of the Secretariat under the service agreement between the Convention and IUCN. Regular meetings and alignment of processes and policies continue in the different areas under the service agreement, such as finance and accounting, information technology, facility management and human resources.

Collaboration with the International Partnership for Blue Carbon (IPBC)

40. The Secretariat continues to be engaged in the International Partnership for Blue Carbon (IPBC). It participated in an IPBC partners dialogue meeting on April 2021 as well as in the IPBC Task Group Meeting focusing on blue carbon in international fora on 15 July 2021, providing information and updates on work under the Convention in response to Resolution XIII.14, including results and outcomes of work of the STRP, and inviting IPBC and its partners to support outreach. The Secretariat contributed to the IPBC report Coastal Blue Carbon Ecosystems in International Frameworks and Conventions⁵, published in 2021, and participated as a panellist at the IPBC side event “Working together to deliver outcomes for climate, the environment and people”, at UNFCCC COP26 on 6 November 2021.

⁵ [Coastal Blue Carbon Ecosystems in International Frameworks and Conventions](#)